

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Peter DeFazio today lashed out at the Obama Administration saying the Administration's policies to protect and create jobs in Oregon's timber dependent communities are failing rural Oregonians. DeFazio's statement was in response to today's announcement by the Swanson Group that it is indefinitely closing its Glendale sawmill. DeFazio pointed to the failure of the Obama Administration to offer a meaningful forest management plan to create family-wage jobs and improve forest health, and failed trade agreements that have shipped millions of jobs overseas and undermined domestic industries as contributing to today's announced closure.

More than a year after Secretary Salazar administratively withdrew the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR) to increase logging on BLM lands in Western Oregon, timber volume in Southwest Oregon has come to a screeching halt. With two weeks before the end of the current fiscal year, the Medford BLM District has sold only 2.2 million board feet of timber, approximately 10% of the volume promised by Secretary Salazar when he withdrew WOPR. The loss in supply of timber from public lands has forced local mills to lay off workers, cut hours, and even close their doors.

Timber-dependent communities in Southwest Oregon have also suffered from poorly enforced trade agreements supported by the Bush and Obama administrations. The U.S.-Canada Softwood Lumber Trade Agreement, signed in 2006 by the Bush Administration and designed to reduce imports of heavily subsidized Canadian softwood lumber to Northwest markets, has gone largely unenforced. Canada began violating the agreement before the ink of the agreement was dry and the U.S. has responded with little or no enforcement. The result has been reduced U.S. production, mill closures and the loss of infrastructure, and losses of thousands of family-wage jobs.

“The Obama Administration’s policies to protect and create jobs in rural Southwest Oregon have been total failures. Period,” DeFazio said. “We were promised a predictable supply of timber over a year ago to keep Oregonians working in the woods and to preserve the infrastructure. We haven’t seen it. We were promised a long-term forest management plan for Western Oregon to replace WOPR. Instead, we got a plan to have a plan from the BLM Task Force last month. And to add insult to injury, the administration is supporting trade policies that are undermining American industries. My constituents are losing their jobs due to these policies.”

The Obama Administration’s proposed budget for next year would cut 10% from the Oregon Bureau of Land Management budget. This cut would severely impact the ability of the BLM to move forward with responsible timber projects in the coming year as well as restrict the agency’s ability to develop a long-term forest management plan. However, DeFazio is confident he will be able to secure level funding for the Oregon BLM budget for next year in the Interior Appropriations bill.

“It’s not clear to me how you can make promises to have a predictable supply of timber and a meaningful long-term plan on the one hand, and call for budget cuts on the other hand,” DeFazio continued. “Timber-dependent communities are tired of getting jerked around. Fortunately, I have been able to work closely with Chairman Moran to restore needed funding for next year in the House Interior Appropriations bill to complete plans and provide timber to prevent further mill closures and layoffs.”

Last week, DeFazio also sent a bipartisan letter to the Committee on House Administration to register the “Congressional Caucus on Lumber.” The Caucus would consist of a bipartisan group of Members dedicated to enforcing trade agreements like the U.S.- Canada Softwood Lumber Agreement and promoting fair trade and a level playing field as it relates to wood products. DeFazio will serve as a Co-Chair with Rep. Walter Jones, (R- NC), Rep. Cathy McMorris-Rodgers (R-WA), and Rep. Michael Michaud (D-ME). The coalition will seek

membership after Congress returns from the August district work period.

“The Canada softwood issue is just another sad example of how we’re losing the trade war,” DeFazio said. “The illegal flow of highly subsidized softwood lumber from Canada into U.S. markets is costing us jobs, infrastructure, and devastating rural communities. But instead of standing up for American workers in the wood products industry, the Obama Administration is sitting on its hands. This caucus is about using our voice and vote in Congress to stand up for the millions of workers who stand to lose their jobs and livelihoods unless our trade policies change.”